Conceiving the City: London, Literature, and Art 1870-1914 by Nicholas Freeman
Review by: Chris Louttit
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provinces of Europe were surrounded by information about distant opportunities' (p. 81). On the other hand, Thomas Ahnert, a student of early modern intellectual history, considers 'The Atlantic Enlightenment and German Responses to the American Revolution, *c.* 1775 to *c.* 1800'. In the essay that follows, Sarah F. Wood, a student of late eighteenth-century American fiction, reflects on 'Transatlantic Cervantics: Don Quixote and the Fictions of American Enlightenment'. A distinguished authority on British Romantic Literature, James Chandler writes on the forgotten novelist William Hill Brown and his neglected novel *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), in which is found one of the earliest published instances of the use of the words '*transatlantick* idea' (p. 134). The final two contributions to the collection are both by professors of American history. Peter S. Onuf's subject is 'Adam Smith and the Crisis of the American Union', whereas Paul A. Gilje tackles the intriguing topic of 'The Enlightenment at Sea in the Atlantic World'.

A significant omission from the discourse in *The Atlantic Enlightenment* is a discussion of the book as an artefact. This has been the subject of two recent and important monographs. One is James Raven's *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society 1748–1811* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002). The other is Richard B. Sher's magisterial *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland and America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006). It is indeed curious that neither is even mentioned in the listing of 'Works Cited'.

Each contribution to the volume contains extensive annotations usefully located at the foot of the page. The 'Works Cited' consists of 'Manuscript Sources' and an alphabetically arranged listed of 'Printed Primary Sources'. The index is name- rather than topic-oriented. There are some useful maps and other illustrations. The publishers have produced a pleasantly typeset and firmly bound volume of essays that provide plenty of food for thought. Most contributors write clearly and without unnecessary terminology. In short, the volume provides a focal point for future research on a fascinating subject.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY WILLIAM BAKER

Conceiving the City: London, Literature, and Art 1870–1914. By NICHOLAS FREEMAN. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007. xii+240 pp. £50. ISBN 978–0–19–921818–9.

Towards the end of *Conceiving the City* Nicholas Freeman reminds his reader of 'the difficulty of writing about London' and notes sensibly that 'The questions that faced chroniclers as diverse as Gissing, Monet, and Conrad remain as provocative and irresolvable as they were a hundred or so years earlier' (p. 207). The idea of London as an 'irresolvable' puzzle full of excessive meanings is not a new one in creative and critical writing about the city; it has been discussed ably by a varied range of writers from Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair to Julian Wolfreys. Freeman's book adds to this

copious literature on London by refreshingly approaching the problem not through contemporary critical theory, as Wolfreys and others have done, but by mining the insights of those who lived and worked in the late nineteenth-century city and 'grappled with devising a language of metropolitan representation' themselves (p. v). This strategy provides a new historicized way of seeing the city. It is also fitting since, as Freeman points out in his fascinating and richly detailed introduction, literary figures such as George Sims, Henry James, and Arthur Symons actually anticipated the theorizing and interdisciplinary nature of urban studies in the mid- to late twentieth century by using 'a constantly evolving blend of ideas from a variety of sources' to represent and engage with the city (p. 3).

Rather than focusing on just a few major examples, Freeman analyses this contemporary 'attempt to articulate a condition of "cityness"' (p. 3) across an impressively broad selection of writers and artists. In doing this one of Freeman's aims is deliberately to 'blur the boundaries of the canon of late Victorian literature and art' (p. vi). As well as drawing much-needed further attention to less frequently discussed authors such as Arthur Machen, George Egerton, and Arthur Symons, Freeman's approach has the benefit of placing more canonical figures such as Conrad and T. S. Eliot in unfamiliar contexts. In tracing how these writers conceive the city Freeman is also concerned with how their work relates to wider trends in the development of realism in the period. This is one of the most valuable and original aspects of his study. Rather than distancing himself from issues of reality and representation as Julian Wolfreys does in *Writing London: The Trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), Freeman shows how broad and flexible realism actually was in dealing with *fin de siècle* London, not just offering a recording of quotidian reality but instead dynamically incorporating the procedures of naturalism, impressionism, and symbolism.

Freeman's study is particularly effective, then, in exploring such larger movements in conceiving the city and analysing the complex interrelations between them. The book's wide focus means, however, that the analysis can occasionally be suggestive rather than fully developed. Another minor criticism is that Freeman's discussion of the visual arts might have focused more on the non-canonical and been more fully integrated into all of the chapters. The rather neglected black-and-white social realist works by illustrators of *The Graphic* in the 1870s, such as Luke Fildes, Frank Holl, and Hubert von Herkomer, could, for instance, have been profitably considered as visual examples in the predominantly literary chapter on empiricist methods of looking at London. These reservations should not, though, diminish Freeman's achievements. A final success is the way in which his study resists standard conceptions of literary periodization. With characteristic subtlety he reveals how excessively modern the late nineteenth-century works he discusses are, while simultaneously showing how writers such as Ford Madox Ford and T. S. Eliot were equally indebted to the realist, impressionist, and symbolist movements which influenced them.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER CHRIS LOUTTIT